



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
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San Francisco, CA 94105

FACT SHEET

Proposed Rule Announcing Intent to Grant California's Request to Reclassify the San Joaquin Valley Ozone Nonattainment Area from Severe to Extreme for the 1-hour National Standard

February 13, 2004

Today's Action

- EPA's Regional Administrator has signed a proposed rule to inform the public that we intend to grant the State of California's request to reclassify the San Joaquin Valley nonattainment area (SJV) from severe to extreme for the national 1-hour ozone standard. The rule also proposes deadlines for submittal of an extreme area attainment plan and revisions to existing permit rules for the area.
- The State has requested that EPA reclassify the SJV to extreme because the standard could not be attained by 2005. The request for reclassification is authorized under section 181(d)(3) of the federal Clean Air Act (CAA).
- The EPA action to reclassify the district to extreme is nondiscretionary. The reclassification to extreme is not effective at this time but would be upon the effective date of the final rule.
- The reclassification results in more stringent federal air quality requirements on sources in the air basin. For example:
 - Major sources will be subject to federal permitting requirements if their emissions of ozone precursors exceed 10 tons per year (lowered from 25 tpy) and modifications at existing major sources will be subject if any increase of an ozone precursor occurs (lowered from 25 tpy).
 - Emission offset ratios are increased for major new or modified sources of ozone precursors.
- EPA is seeking comment on when the State must submit: 1) a plan that demonstrates attainment for the 1-hour ozone standard; and 2) revisions to the existing permit rules for the SJV to incorporate the extreme area requirements (e.g., offset ratio, major source definition, major modification definition). EPA proposes deadlines for these submittals of October 1, 2004 and 12 months after the effective date of the rule, respectively.
- The proposed rule will be published in the Federal Register in the coming weeks and will provide for a 30-day comment period. A signed pre-publication version of the rule is available now at: www.epa.gov/region09/air.

Background:

- The ground-level ozone air quality in the San Joaquin Valley has generally improved over the past several decades, but not as quickly as required by federal law. In particular, the Valley still exceeded the 1-hour ozone standard 31 times in 2002 and 37 times in 2003.
- The SJV is under the jurisdiction of the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District and consists of the following counties in California's central valley: San Joaquin, the western portion of Kern, Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, Stanislaus and Tulare.
- Initially classified as a serious ozone nonattainment area, in December 2001, EPA reclassified the SJV to a severe nonattainment area and required the State to submit a new plan by May 31, 2002.
- On October 2, 2002, EPA found that the State failed to submit certain required elements of the severe area plan by May 31, 2002. This finding started the 18-month clock for imposition of the offset sanction and two-year clock for the highway sanction in the SJV.
- In response to this finding, the State has since submitted most of the required severe area plan elements. With the reclassification to extreme, the sanction clocks that started as a result of the failure to submit finding would stop.
- Ozone, also known as smog, can irritate your respiratory system, causing coughing, throat irritation or a burning sensation in the airways. It can reduce lung function, so that you may have feelings of chest tightness, wheezing, or shortness of breath.

Further Information

- For more information, please contact David Wampler, U.S. EPA Region 9, Air Planning Office, at 415-972-3975; wampler.david@epa.gov